SOCIAL MILIEU
Plants and animals have been essential to man ever since he was born. Trees, plants and roots and its fruits have been extremely essential as his physical and psychological need. Man has respected these plants and trees. They have been an object of ritual and worship like the trees of Pipal, Śāla, Vaḍa, Tuṣasi, etc. We have ample references of them in the Purāṇas and classical Sanskrit literature. Sanskrit poets have sung their glories in all the ages of history. Kālīḍāsa, a poet laureate of Indian culture, has richly depicted Flora and Fauna in his works. They also have a great medicinal value and are also used by women to beautify themselves.

Birds and animals have helped to satisfy man’s material needs and also provided him recreation. With the invention of agriculture, Savage man was compelled to take help of animals in agriculture and transport. With the rise of civilization, animals became his best friends. Archaeology has proved that the oldest friend of man was dog. Fables and parables were woven around the animal world. In the Hindu pantheon Lord Viṣṇu took incarnation in the form of animal or a composite form of animal and human to destroy demons and to help his devotees e.g. incarnation of Narasimha. There are various such references in the Vaisṇava Purāṇas. Birds and animals have been a source of inspiration and symbolization. This association of man with birds and animals can be observed right from prehistoric times in the cave paintings; seals, sculptures, potteries, till the present day. The history of Indian Rāgas...
and Rāginīs reveals that many Rāginīs have earned their names from birds and animals e.g. Kokila, Mayuri, Nāgadhvani, Hamsadhvani, Kuraṇji, etc. Today man has become more environment conscious and as birds are most attractive feature of the nature, tremendous amount of writing, reading, painting on these are being done.

Flora and Fauna in a painting symbolizes region, season, climate, atmosphere and obviously the result - the mood. It is an important asset of Rāgamālā painting, a worthy attribute essential to beautify paintings and is an essential clue for scholars and historians.

Nature and the surrounding have played an important part in the miniature painting especially in Baramāsā, the Gīta Goviṇḍa, Vasaṇṭa Vīlāsa and the Rāgamālā paintings. Indeed nature was an asset in expressing and adding to the aesthetic pleasure and artists too found pleasure in defining them. Though the iconography of the Rāgamālā was quite similar, the flora and fauna differed in its depiction from region to region and artist to artist. It enhanced the composition and helped in identifying the picture like in Vasaṇṭa Rāga the depiction of cuckoo and the mango flowers (Āmramaṇjari). Similarly clouds, rains, birds, animals, insects added to the moods of excitement or depression of the Nāyaka and Nāyikā depicted. At times these motifs were also used as space fillers. Landscapes, clouds and tree types are depicted in all the Rāgamālā paintings from the earliest Kalpaśūtra wherein are found a few trees, animals and birds. Interesting illustrations of trees are depicted in some of the earliest Rāgamālā paintings of Gujarat [4] (Pis. 4, 5, 6 and 7) (Circa 1575 A.D.). It would be difficult to identify some of the Rāgās without the birds and animals
in the absence of inscriptions e.g. Åśāvari without snakes; Toḍī without deers;
Kakubha, Kāmoda, Megha, Vasaṅta, Madhumādhavi, without peacocks; and
Baṅgal without a tiger. Identifiable birds and unidentifiable tiny birds in the
sky, squirrels, monkeys, dogs, frogs, snakes, cats, elephants and many more
enhance the compositions. Some of them represent symbolism. The peacocks
are considered half tame pets of the Rājput courts and also a symbol of love.

Rain does not only indicate merely season but also time for the union. The
snake like lightening is described by poets as an expression of passion and
hope. The stages of depiction of cloud patterns in these Rāgamālā paintings is
first observed in the Sūri Rāgamālā [2] as in the Kalpasūtra Rāgamālā [1] there
is no space for the Flora and Fauna, the space whatever available has been
occupied by the single figure and its consort, at times a tree or two occupy the
space. The background is left blank only a design of three dots (Tri Būndī)
to form a triangle kind of a pattern is evenly spread, popular in Gujarat upto
the twenteith century A.D. as a textile pattern. In the Sūri Rāgamālā (Pl. 2)
the backgrounds are plain with flat bold colour, a cluster of three or four dots
are evenly spread in the background as in the Kalpasūtra Rāgamālā , but here
a moon and stars are also depicted in folio no. 3, Rāga Lalita. Cloud pattern
consists of wavy parallel lines edged by a zigzag line as in Fig. 1.

While in the Rāgamālā of Gujarat last quarter of the 16th century A.D.
[5] indication of clouds are parallel zigzag lines of two colours - dull blue and
mauve emphasized by a bold line in black as in (Pl. 8). They are either
drawn horizontally from left to the right side or if there is a pavillion on one
side of the picture they are diagonally depicted in the upper hand corner,
the Sun Rāgamālā also follows this rule and also the Bhairavi [3]. Mid 16th
century A.D. (Pl. 3) of J.C. French collection, but here this horizontal and
diagonal band divides the two divisions into two different colours, i.e. the
blue sky and the green horizon, the upper representing the blue sky, and the
lower, the green horizon divided by a white band edged by a black curvilinear
line. The white has been merged by circular dots (Fig. 2). This can be
also observed in the similar style of work, the Caurapāṇcāsikā, N.C. Mehta
collection, Ahmedabad, where at places an attempt has been made to merge
the blue and white observed in later sets too. In the Būndī Rāgamālā [6] of
Cūnāra which according to date stands next in order. The matured style of
work could not belong to as early date as 1590-1 A.D. is also stated by various
other scholars. The sky is rendered in shades of blue with gradual toning in
some folios. It represents various moods. Night is depicted full of stars and
moon. In Mālaśri Rāgini of this set, the Tithi (Day) can be judged as Bij by
the thin curvature of the moon. Day is represented by a warm sun blazing
in the composition as in Bilāval Rāgini (Pl. 10). The blank sky in Bhairavī
expresses peace as the woman prays at the Liṅga of Śiva (Pl. 10A). In Baṅgal
Rāgini, curled cloud patterns, lightening and rain create a disturbed feeling.
In the Rāgamālā set of Ca. 1600 A.D. Mālwā [7], the pictures are divided
into two divisions, the sky and the ground. The sky joining the ground line
is painted, which gradually merges into the blue upwards. Initially blue was
applied in the complete space and then white was applied on it, hence a pure
white colour was not obtained (Pl. 11). In the Cāvaṇḍ Rāgamālā the picture
is divided horizontally [8] into the sky band, the horizon and the foreground
band. The sky band is similar to the earlier Rāgamālā mentioned. In the
earlier Rāgamalā the white is merged with blue and here it is not merged
but just placed as a white broad line between the two divisions and white
horizontal strokes are drawn in the blue (Figure 3).

The effect is more realistic in the provincial Mughal set of Ca. 1610 A.D.,
commonly called the Manley Rāgamalā [10]. Extremely tiny birds in the sky
give a more realistic approach to it (Pl. 12). In the Sahibdin’s dated 1628
A.D. Mewār Rāgamalā [12], space is divided into three planes and incidents
invariably take place in the central plane. The sky is usually painted in flat
blue colour, rainy and cloudy skies are dark blue, with lightening and cranes
flying (Pl. 17). In the Boston Rāgamalā [13] the diffusion of colour for clouds
as stated earlier has been developed here in a water colour technique, wherein,
wet colours are placed side by side and have naturally flown into each other
(Pl. 18). In the Gem Palace Rāgamalā of Mewār [15] Ca. 1650 A.D. though
the skyline is similar to the Cāwanḍ Rāgamalā of Mewār 1605 A.D. set, here
a half moon or a sun with spiked rays and a face is occasionally depicted as
in Sārańga Rāga. The Mārwār [26] Ca. 1750 A.D. Rāgamalā is an extremely
beautiful set in folk style. The sky pattern, in the day scene, is a flat blue
patch of colour followed by a yellow horizontal band against which stands the
trees. Night scene is represented in black colour on which shine the stars and
the moon. The stars are depicted by blue dots and some closer ones which
shine with sparks. The moon is double lined with rays as in Fig. 4.

In the Buṇḍī Rāgamalā one folio of 1768 A.D. [28] of Kōṭā, the Meghamalhāra
Rāginī depicts multicoloured clouds with two angels showering basket full
of flowers on the hero. Similarly in the Samantini Rāginī, first wife of
Sīndhuputra has a war scene and far above in the clouds is depicted a chariot.

The gradual development of tree types from the earliest Kalpasūtra [1] Rāgamālā (Pl. 1) begins with simplified trees which are very few, one or two or not at all, in every picture. Coconut or palm trees are depicted while the rest have a decorative tree pattern and cannot be identified (Fig. 5).

A Rāginī either holding a branch of a tree or is depicted seated on a swing tied to these trees. Flowers are depicted in the hands in a simplified manner, they are three petalled lotuses. Many of the pictures have these Rāginīs holding them (Fig. 6).

At the end of every series of a family. a beautiful tree with birds are depicted and at the end of the complete set of Pūrṇa Kaḷaśā has been painted by the artist stating that the pictures are completed. In the Sūri Rāgamālā (Pl. 2) [2]. There is lush green vegetation of colourful trees though they are of the same shape as in the earlier Rāgamālā, the representations of the leaves vary and give a different look as in Fig. 7. There are also trees that look natural like the mango trees and the Aśoka trees. In the hands of the Rāginī Kakubha are flowers as in Fig. 7.

Tree types in Gujarat (Ca. 1575 A.D.) [4] take an interesting turn. Trees have been very clearly depicted here with plenty of space to breathe as the format of the set is horizontal. The background is plain, which is the colour of the paper on which these trees are depicted. They take interesting shapes and forms as in Fig. 8.

Oval shaped with crooked trunk, tree with branches and no leaves (it could
have helped in depicting a season or emotion, but it is not so here), a tree with three petalled blossom and a tree with globule red fruits. Only trees identifiable are the Asōka and the plaintain trees (Fig. 8). The lady in Guṇakārī (Pl. 5) has a typical potted plant. Though this set is in a folk style it has been painted by a matured and confident hand; it is very creative in its representation of various forms and the composition has a special attraction.

In the Bundi Rāgamālā [6] dated 1590-1 A.D., the flora and fauna is richly depicted. Trees are rendered realistically and can be identified. Trees like Pipal, palm, plantain, flowering wine and various plants are are also indicated. Lotus are depicted in a pond. Nature in its full bloom can be observed in these paintings. Trees are full of flowers even the Banana tree has a crimson spathe (Pl. 10-A) Bhairava Rāgini.

In the Rāgamālā of Mālwā [7] of Ca. 1600 A.D. at Bhārat Kalā Bhavan, there is symmetry in the composition. Trees are balanced in the picture frame. Varieties of trees are depicted with the sprays emerging from the sides (Pl. 11). The Cāwanḍ Rāgamālā [8] has tree types in a folk manner. They are very closer in representation to the Sūri Rāgamālā [2]. Asōka and the plantain trees can be identified and a third variety is the sprays emerging from the sides of the tree (Fig. 9).

This device of the sprays emerging from the sides of the tree is an important factor in dating early Rājasthāni paintings up to the 1680 A.D. but in Mālwā paintings they are observed till a later date. It is derived from Mughal miniature paintings which in its turn derived it from the Persian miniature paintings where it appears as early as the 12th century A.D.
The Provincial Mughal set Ca. 1610 A.D. [10] known as the Manley Rāgamālā, has trees that can be identified as they are quite realistic. The typical characteristics of tree types in this set are the trees emerging out of rock spots as in Fig. 10. Another characteristic of this set is decorative plants in the foreground as seen on the painted walls of the Mughal and Rājput monuments. Dwarf trees with their roots visible are observed here. The landscape here takes a movement with plenty of mounts, hills, etc., which enhances the picture and gives it a more realistic touch. Nature is very beautifully depicted in this style. The peculiarity in the colour is light green, in fact, the picture is in tones of a particular green. The treatment of the hill and rock in dull colour is conventionalized in Mughal painting from Akbar period onwards.

The tree types in the Pāli Rāgamālā [11] are quite close to the Cāwaṇḍ especially in the sprays emerging from the sides of the trees. The major representation of a tree is exactly akin to a particular tree in the Gujarat Ca. 1575 A.D. set (Fig. 11).

The Mewār Rāgamālā dated 1628 A.D. [12] has decorative tree patterns as in Fig. 13, they are placed in space, not in alignment but spread forward and backward in the landscape at different places. A semi-stylized large rounded tree with decorative fan-like foliage was the favourite of the artist Sāhibdin, who painted this set. Creepers and flowering meanders were also used as space fillers and then colours changed with the colour of the background. The tree (Fig. 13B) is like in the Cāwaṇḍ Rāgamālā, only the shape is different. A comparison of this Rāgamālā with that painted at Cāwaṇḍ which has a gap of twenty years is still not a Mughal example. Its intention is still of the Cāwaṇḍ
The Mālwa I Ca. 1640 A.D. [13] so-called Boston Rāgamālā has extremely interesting tree types, elongated and colourful with sprays emerging from the sides (Fig. 14).

The tree types in Mālwa II Ca. 1650 A.D. [14] (Pl. 19) are worth mentioning. They have a peculiar characteristics of tree types as in (Fig. 15); elongated leaves shooting from one point. Here also are observed the sprays emerging from the sides of the trees, but they have larger leaves. Lotuses in the pond and tiny yellow water flower are depicted.

The Gem Palace Rāgamālā , Mewār Ca. 1650 A.D. is a beautiful set with minute details and lush green vegetation [15] (Pls. 21, 23 and 24). Variety of tree types, the mango, banana, Aśoka, palm, etc., can be identified, the composition is enhanced on the background by trees. Centre space by rock and foreground by little grass, shrubs, wild flowers and plants. Every part of the composition is decorated by ornamental details.

The Mālwa III [18] Ca. 1680 A.D. has tree types similar to the Boston Rāgamālā , Mālwa I elongated tall trees with sprays emerging from sides. Banana and pine trees are also present (Pls. 26 and 27). The tree types in the Mārwar [26] Ca. 1750 A.D. is an extremely beautiful set. Trees stand against a yellow background. Symmetry and balance are maintained in the placing of trees. Pine trees, Banana trees and a common shape trees with different leaf motifs, and coconut trees are observed (Fig. 16), green grass like a textile

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1 Barret, D., Gray, B., 'Paintings of India', p. 137
pattern is evenly spread on the ground in Naṭa Rāga or as in Megha Mallār Rāginī.

The tree types in the Buṇḍī/Koṭā school of 1768 A.D. [28] has realistically rendered trees but they have been placed like playing cards, one above the other slightly tilted showing the characteristics of the behind one. The most interesting part is every alternate tree is usually the Banana tree (Pl. 38).

Animals and birds have been depicted in the Kalpasūtra paintings as Vāhanas of the Tīrthankaras and deities. Animals and birds as various Vāhanas are: Śrī Rāga, swan; Draviḍa Bhāṣā, the horse; Vasanāta, the cuckoo; Rāmgiri Rāginī has no Vāhana, Rāga Bhairava, the bull; Bhāṣā the eagle; Paṅcama Rāga, the elephant; Ābhīrībhāṣā, the buffalo; Megha Rāga, the peacock; Debala Rāginī, the peacock; Mālava Kausiki, the kraunch; Gāndhārī Rāginī, the fish; Gauḍī Rāginī, the elephant; Rāginī Kōlāhālā, the parrot; Dholābhāṣā, the goat; Gujāri, the male goat; Bhairavī, the eagle; Velākulī Rāginī, the bull; Karnāṭī Rāginī, the elephant; Haṁsībhāṣā, the swan; Rāginī Stambhatīrtha, the cobra; Trigunā Rāginī, the peacock; Kakubā Rāginī, the duck; Vairāḍībhāṣā, the camel; Sāmerī bhāṣā, the duck; Devagiri Rāginī, the Garuḍa; Chokṣāsālika, the Haṁsa of Baṅgalī, the deer; Kāmōdī, the curlew; Nāṭṭa Nārāyaṇa, the Garuḍa; Sindhu Mallārī, the elephant; Mallārī, the parrot; Duṁbībhāṣā, the elephant; Totikā, the deer; Motikā, the cock; Nattībhāṣā, the curlew; rest of the other Rāginīs mentioned are without Vāhanas2.

It seemed impossible to complete a Rāgamālā without birds and animals, but Sūrī Rāgamālā is an exception to this. It does not consist of a single

2 Nawāb Sārābhāi, 'Masterpieces of the Kalpasūtra paintings', pp. 1-7
bird or an animal. Similarly the Gujarat Ca. 1575 A.D. [4] Rāgamālā has a number of animals and birds. Nāṭṭa has a horse (Pl. 4). Many of the pictures have Gargolye with animal heads too. In the Paṭamaṇjari Rāgini niche in the wall, or a wall painting depicts, two birds, some of the proportions of birds are larger in comparison to human, as the birds in Mālava Rāga and the peacocks in Mālaśī Rāgini. Tōdī has the extreme beautiful depiction of deers, Gujarī (Baṅgala) has a tiger and Āsāvari has the snakes with large hoods and ears. The hoods of the snakes and the heads of tigers are the same. Only the shape of the body has been changed to look different.

The Gujarat, last quarter of the 16th century A.D. [5] (Pl. 8) Rāgamālā, has nine folios known. Amongst the nine folios, elephant and peacocks have been observed, in two folios. They are larger in proportion to the human beings. The peacock type is depicted (Fig 17). The Buṇḍī Rāgamālā [6] (Pl. 10A) dated 1590-01 A.D., has a variety of animals depicted. The artist has tried to depict as many animals, birds and creatures as he could with keen interest and craftsmanship. Birds like peacock, sparrow, cuckoo, parrot, weaver bird and its nests; crow, cranes, ducks - large and small unidentified birds, chordates like fishes, frogs and squirrels; even bees have been depicted. All these have been realistically painted.

A variety of animals are depicted in the Cāwaṇḍ Rāgamālā [8]; red and green parrots, deers, peacocks as in Fig. 17 have starring eyes, ducks, tigers, deers and snakes are also depicted.

In a Gujarat 1608-9 A.D. set [9], amongst various animals and birds, the
animal in folio 11 (Pl. 13) is a composite figure of Gaja Vyāla. It is interesting to note here that similar form is found in the house of Sārabhāī Nawāb, Ahmedabad (Pl. 40).

Varieties of birds are illustrated in the Provincial Mughal Rāgamālā of Ca. 1610 A.D. Many rare birds are painted here, the peacock is a peculiar type (Fig. 17), a few other animals are also depicted. The peacock in Pāli Rāgamālā [11] is quite similar to the one in Cāvaṇḍ Rāgamālā, only that the design in its feathers changes (Fig. 17). Amongst animals such as monkeys, in Gāndhār Rāgini; deer in Tōḍī; a cock in Vībhāsa; only wherever required are depicted. In the Mālwā Ca. 1640 A.D. Rāgamālā [13], there is no unnecessary depiction of birds and animals except the one that belongs to the set iconography is depicted.

The compositions are simplified and not congested but the architecture with plenty of decoration does not make it look so.

Not many animals or birds have been depicted in Mālwā II Ca. 1650 A.D. [14] but occasionally along with a few birds, a monkey, and a peacock are observed. The peacock is a skeletal kind of a being and is there above the ceiling, always in some movement. Its movements are interesting (Fig. 17).

The Gem Palace Rāgamālā of Ca. 1650 A.D. [15] (Pls. 21, 22, 23 and 24) has a large number of birds and animals, fishes in ponds, peacocks, horses, camel in the Maru Rāgini and even cows are introduced in this set as in Sāraṅg Rāgini.

The Būndī 1768 A.D. set [28] (Pl. 38) depicts variety of birds and animals.
A peculiarity here is the Nāyaka seated on a lion or a horse as depicted in twofolios.

In all these Rāgamālas normally the lowest part of the composition in particular folios consists of water fronts, followed by streams and rivers, consisting of lotuses, ducks, fishes, etc. In earlier paintings, later on they were replaced by water revervoirs with fountains followed by a beautiful planned garden with lattices leading to a verandah, where Rāgās and Rāginīs were depicted. The earliest depiction of water is observed in Rāgamālā of Bhairavi 3 of Victoria and Albert Museum, mid. of the 16th century A.D. It occupies the lowest strip of the painting and is without indication of water by design or colour. Only lotuses and ducks enhance the composition in a design pattern (Fig. 18) [3].

In the Rāgamālā of Gujarat Ca. 1575 A.D. [4] a semi-circular lake with fishes in it in a folk style is depicted, as in Fig. 19 (Pls. 6 and 7).

In the Buṇḍi Rāgamālā dated 1590-1 A.D. [6] water is represented in the form of lakes, ponds and also water tanks. In Bhairavi (Pl. 10A) a water pond with pink stone steps is depicted, the edging of the stone is also carved with a symmetrical decorative border. The pond consists of water represented by thin lines of white on a dark blue background. Along with lotuses it consists of fishes (large and small), very realistically represented) ducks, cranes (of two varieties), bees over the lotuses and frogs at the edge of the steps are depicted. Bilāval Rāginī of the same set (Pl. 10) depicts a fountain in a water reservoir, a part of the monument is depicted.
Water in the Cāwaṇḍ Rāgamālā [8] is observed in Aśāvari Rāginī as a lake and a rocky location. The water is represented in these as stock basket pattern and only in Aśāvari Rāginī. Normally the concept of water front as the lowest of the composition is not followed in this set.

In Pāli (Mārwār) set [11] water reservoir in the Setamalhār Rāginī would have remained unobserved as there is no indication of water. In a yellow background are painted lotuses in a series at equal intervals (Fig. 20). It is observed that this band of water flowers has been indicated in a number of Rāgamālās, at a stage they became monotonous and a decorative motif as designed borders.

In the Mālwā I [13] Boston Rāgamālā there are these bands of water reservoir more like floral design borders in Gandhārī Rāginī and Gauri Rāginī (Fig. 21).

In Mālwā II [14] the lower band of lotuses has been extremely beautifully depicted in form, shape and colour. The complete folio of this set Bhairavī Rāginī is in a pleasant colour scheme. Water reservoir is a strip occupying the lowest space, a lotus flower, a yellow flower, a fish and a leaf is the sequence of repetition. The same lotuses have been offered at the shrine and hence the colour forms a repetition and an excellent balance (Fig. 22).

In the Gem Palace Rāgamālā Ca. 1650 A.D. [15], water is always indicated by lakes and ponds. Stock basket pattern for water is applied, fishes of a peculiar variety are depicted. Lotuses, its leaves and water plants decorate the lakes and ponds (Pl. 23) as in (Fig. 23).
In the Marwar Rāgamālā of Ca. 1750 A.D. [26] the water lake or reservoir is depicted by small strokes of white on blue and a three-petalled lotus and its leaves are placed at equal intervals (Fig. 24).

Water is indicated in Buṇḍī/Kōṭā Rāgamālās 1768 A.D. [28] as lakes, ponds and water reservoirs. The ponds and lakes consist of lotuses and ducks and a lake in Kṣhema Kalyāṇapuṭri depicts women boating and swimming in the nude.

These various sets scattered over a large area depict similar Rāgamālās with similar iconography. It is astonishing how the iconography was maintained over such a vast area wherein the way of life and the culture differed from region to region. Here in the Rāgamālās though similar in concept differed in stylization from artist to artist and region to region. Indeed regional influence also effected it. More than any other themes amongst miniature paintings, the Rāgamālā was the right subject as is found the same subject represented in different regions and by various artists i.e. same subject represented in different ways in different regions. From this study we can say that natural surroundings depicted around the Nāyakas and Nāykās help in enhancing the subject. Listening to the sound of the leaves, singing and chirping of the birds and animals help in supporting the expression of various Rasas, and create a rhythmic atmosphere which pleases our eyes.